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PATRIOTISM AND SACRIFICE

BY VERNON KELLOGG

AFTER dinner in a Massachusetts Avenue house not long ago, a gentleman whose platinum-buttoned, heavily-corded white silk waistcoat indicated considerable interest in dress, and the means to indulge it, took up the matter, where the host had dropped it, of doing one's bit. The host had not said what he was doing. He didn't need to. Everyone knows who knows Washington to-day.

The gentleman of the indicative waistcoat said that as he could not get into uniform and there did not seem to be exactly the right place for him in Washington, he was going in for saving food. He was, in fact, limiting himself to two slices of toast with his morning coffee. He had long been accustomed to three, or even four. He was now living religiously up—or rather down—to two; never made an exception of a single morning, except, perhaps, Sundays.

Now, if everybody would do what he was doing, he said, one or two slices of toast multiplied by everybody would equal so many slices a day, which, in turn, would equal so much wheat flour, which would in so many weeks or months be so many tons saved for the wheat-hungry English and French and Italians and Belgians. He took a second Havana, and beamed patriotically and sacrificially on our group.

The last time that I was in Antwerp, proud old Flemish city of trade and wealth, was in March, 1917. It was after we had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany and were moving obviously on toward war. The Commission for Relief in Belgium was preparing to take its staff out of the occupied territory of Belgium and Northern France where we had been "relievers" for nearly two and a half years, and I was going out to Rotterdam where our food-ships unload,

and then across to our head office in London to report on the situation inside.

It was not an encouraging situation. Ever since the first of February when the Germans had declared their danger zones about the United Kingdom, including all of the Channel, not a single one of our food-ships had reached Rotterdam. The stocks of food in our central depots in Belgium were dangerously low, and the communal depots could not be kept fully supplied. This meant that thousands, hundreds of thousands, of Belgians, who had heretofore got their food from the communal depots, were forced into the soup lines which were always provided for first.

In Antwerp, proud old city of well-to-do Flemish burghers and large families, formerly comfortably housed and fed, the soup lines had increased from fifty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand persons. The soup kitchens and lines themselves were multiplied, but the queues were stretched out to more than double length, and the waiting in them was long. Twelve women fainted as they waited in a single line one day. Half of the men, women and children in wealthy, proud, old Antwerp were getting food from the *soupes*!

Now, an interesting and wonderful and noble thing about this is that there was a way open to many of the *Anversoïis* and the other Belgians forced into the soup lines in the other cities and towns and communes of the country, to avoid the humiliation of the *soupes* and to have more food than they could get there. This way was, to work for the Germans; to go to Germany and work for high wages—at least, the German placards all over the city of Antwerp and all over the rest of Belgium promised high wages—in the German war factories, or to go to the Flanders front and dig trenches or cut up timber for the trenches, or do any of several things that the Germans much wanted these starving Belgians to do.

But they would not do it; they waited in line for a cup of soup and a piece of bread every day for weeks and months and years. And they fastened pieces of old rags on to wooden soles and wore them for shoes. And they made coats out of old blankets, and blankets out of anything. But they said little about this, and did not beam patriotically and sacrificially on other people, for everybody was doing it, and only we few Americans were there to listen and see, and we were mostly too busy trying to make sure that the soup kitchens

had something to make soup out of, to find time to listen or look.

After seeing Belgium and France and England in war-time, I sometimes wonder if America is really in the war at all. There are men in uniform, and there are many posters of the Food Administration and the Liberty Loans, and I saw headlined in the newspapers only this morning the fact that an American sergeant had killed a German. More Americans will have killed more Germans by the time this is published, and the Germans will have killed—ah, I stumble at writing it!—perhaps even many Americans. But more than a million Frenchmen have been killed, and by the time this is published the English “Roll of Honour” will be near the million mark, too, for they are going dreadfully fast these days.

We Americans are patriotic, in this war; but, as for sacrifice, except for the few families already bereft of son or father and those more numerous others whose sons have already gone across and are justifiably suffering constant anxiety because of this, we have not made the beginning of a beginning.

The Food Administration has, indeed, worked us up gradually from “don’t waste,” through a “wheatless day,” and then two, a week, and a “meatless day,” with later an added “porkless” one, and “save sugar” and “save fats,” to a pound and a half of wheat flour limit a week, or, if you are well-to-do and can easily buy many other things, to no wheat at all until the next harvest. And the Fuel Administration has had a “tag-the-shovel” day, and then some chilly Mondays, quickly returning to warmer ones when we objected. And the Treasury has asked us to make our investments in safe securities of lower interest rather than in less safe ones which pay higher interest when they pay any at all.

That, put roughly, is about the extent to which our patriotism has led us to sacrifice.

All this is not to decry the quality of our patriotism or its potency to lead us sometimes to real sacrifice. But so far it simply has not done it.

Perhaps it has not needed to yet. But the Food Administration seems to think differently. It has tried to make evident the opportunity for sacrifice, even if it has not really asked for it, because from what it knows of Belgium and

France and Italy and England, it sees a real opportunity and a real need for a little American sacrifice in the way of eating.

Take the single matter of sugar, for example. Italy and France are now allowing themselves an average of about seventeen ounces of sugar a month per capita. We are "saving sugar" on a consumption basis of over one hundred ounces a month per capita. We do not eat quite all of this on the table or use it in cooking. We drink part of it at the soda fountains, and use up a much smaller part in various factories that produce neither edibles nor potables. But we do actually eat about eighty ounces a month.

Then there is meat. The English now get their meat on ration cards; also their butter, margarine and other fats. They allow themselves twenty ounces of meat, including poultry and game, a week. This is the weight as the meat comes from the butcher, including the bone. To encourage "self-suppliers", the Englishman who catches or raises his own rabbit may eat all of it without weighing it! But in this time of war, and sacrifice for the sake of winning it, we are eating meat, not including poultry and game, at the rate of fifty ounces a week per capita.

Again take the matter of the control of public eating places. There has been constant complaint from the housewife to the Food Administration that it was most discouraging to try to live up to the specific suggestions of the Food Administration appeal for food conservation when the hotels, restaurants, dining cars and clubs were not playing the game also. There was similar complaint in England.

What the Food Administration has done is to renew, more pressingly, its appeals to the managers of the public eating places, and just now it has been promised by a large group of managers of first class hotels and restaurants, that they will toe the mark squarely. In fact, they have offered to keep their toes a little behind the mark chalked down by the Food Administration, and have pledged themselves to use no wheat at all in their kitchens and dining rooms until the next harvest. That is a fine pledge; let us assume that it will be honestly and finely lived up to.

But what the English have done in this same matter is to take no chances—not that I do not prefer the American way, if it works. By Government order the actual quantity of food that may be served in the English public eating places

is strictly and specifically limited. The present allowance of the staple foods is: meat up to the total of your meat card allowance, twenty ounces (as it comes from the butcher) a week; three ounces of bread at breakfast and dinner, two at luncheon, and one and a half at afternoon tea; one-third of an ounce of butter, margarine and other fats at each of the three meals, and one-fourth of an ounce at tea; no sugar at any meal or at tea except that one-seventh of an ounce per person may be used in preparing luncheon and one-seventh in preparing dinner.

This sounds drastic. It is drastic, and is drastically enforced, as anyone who has had recent experience in London hotels and restaurants can assure you. It is really approaching sacrifice in eating. I met a very hungry man the other day who looked the part; he had just come across from England.

England, all along the line, is backing up its appeal for voluntary support of food economy—they say “food economy” over there where we say “food conservation”—by legally enacted and enforced government orders under the Defence of the Realm Act. It is under this act that their Ministry of Food—we call ours Food Administration—is organized and endowed with large power.

The Food Controller of England has authority on a parity with that of the Admiralty or Ministry of War. Our Food Administrator has a very limited authority; he has achieved most of his results by appeals and agreement. He asks people not to hoard or waste food. In England, hoarding and wasting of food are crimes. Marie Corelli was fined three hundred and fifty dollars not long ago for hoarding. For similar foresight, a member of Parliament was recently fined and had his surplus private food stocks confiscated. A captain and steward and fireman of a small steamer were fined and sentenced in March to six months' imprisonment for putting twenty-eight loaves of stale bread in the boat's furnace!

Finally—because we must not make our catalogue tiresomely long—let us refer to the subject, always an all-important one in connection with food physiology and sociology, of bread; or, better, to widen it, of cereals—not meaning by this term breakfast foods, as has come to be a common American usage, but all of the food-grains, wheat, rye, corn, oats, barley, rice, et cetera.

The French are a bread-eating people. The diet of France is 52% bread; 48% other things. We rely on bread for less than 40% of our eating. Any considerable limitation in the quantity and quality of bread in France means sacrifice. Well, French patriotism has led to French sacrifice in the matter of bread. All the wheat flour used in France is obtained by milling the grain at an extraction rate of 85%; that is, from every one hundred pounds of wheat, eighty-five pounds of wheat flour is made. We are milling at 74%.

This action of the French in milling at 85% means an inclusion in the flour of certain outer, rougher parts of the grain usually discarded from the flour for use as animal feed. This grey wheat flour is mixed with from 15% to 30% of flour made from other cereals, corn, barley or rice usually. When this mixed flour is baked into bread, the bread is doled out to the people on ration, by means of bread-cards. The ration adopted in March of this year is about two-thirds the amount the people have been accustomed to. The price of this bread is kept low by government subsidy, so that all may be able to buy the permitted ration, but the price of meat and other foods is so high that it is practically impossible for a large part of the people to make up the bread deficiency in their diet by increasing the use of other foods. The bread situation in France is truly one of sacrifice, of patriotic sacrifice.

Now we of America have a direct relation to this French sacrifice; we play an important part in connection with it; we play this part whether we wish to or not; we are unavoidably associated with it. We can ameliorate it or make it more severe. We have before us inescapably the question of whether to make it a greater sacrifice or a lesser one. Theoretically, I hear the loud answer of all of us: We will make it a lesser one; we will help those noble French, those wonderful French, those sublime French who are to-day carrying the torch of patriotism before the world.

Practically, our answer is less loud, though it is not a shameful answer, it is not wholly discouraging. But it is less loud; the reason of this is that the proper practical answer calls for a little sacrifice.

The situation is simply this: France has sent her men from the farms to the battle-fronts. She has had little fertilizer. She has lost several million acres of agricultural land to the Germans. She had bad weather for her crops

last year. Altogether she is so reduced in food productive power that this reduction and the bad weather let her have last year but 45 per cent of a normal wheat crop. Even in peace time France produces less wheat than she eats. Always she must get wheat from outside; now she must import it on a wholly unusual scale; and it is just now that it is especially difficult to import.

Australia is simply too far away; it is impossibly expensive in tonnage, because of the time element, to get the Australian wheat. Some can come from the Argentine, a little from India. But the great bulk of the imports must come from America.

The situation is almost identical for England, Italy and Belgium.

This makes a great wheat demand on us—a demand far greater than can be met from our normal surplus. What to do? Nothing simpler than to point this out; but doing it—well, there is where our opportunity for a little sacrifice comes in. We must simply eat less wheat. What we do not eat can go to France and the other Allies. In the next three months, that is, until the next harvest, we should restrict our eating of wheat—not of cereals generally, but just of wheat—to one-half our usual use of it. If we reduce the wheat consumption of the whole country to a weekly per capita average of a pound and a half of wheat flour, we can still send overseas that minimum amount indispensable for their “carrying on.” If we eat more, we can’t.

But there is a considerable group of people in this country who simply must have more than a pound and a half of wheat flour a week. Bread is the most convenient and the cheapest of foods, hence the man who must make his money go farthest in an attempt to get even enough to eat must buy bread or the wherewithal to make it. The corollary is that some others must get along without any bread—that is, wheat bread—at all. Those of us who can buy other foods to take its place, as meat, fresh vegetables, and other cereals to be used as breakfast foods, quick breads and the like, must do it so as to keep the national per capita average down to six pounds of wheat flour a month.

We may call this sacrifice if we like. If we do, then here is a beautiful chance not only to be patriotic but to sacrifice something—our taste, perhaps, certainly not our health, for the best physiologists assure us of that.

Those five hundred managers of first-class hotels and restaurants who met the other day in Washington and the day after in New York—for there was not room enough in Washington for them to stay over night—and solemnly pledged themselves to use no wheat at all in their kitchens and dining rooms from April 14th until the next harvest made a good start. A great many households have done the same. More ought to.

So much, then, for wheat and the opportunity it gives us for sacrifice.

Surely there must be other opportunities. The wheat sacrifice is merely the one that happens just now to be very clearly defined and very much needed. The others will reveal themselves to the man or woman looking for them.

Buying Liberty Bonds can be made a sacrifice. Cutting out one's luxuries and cutting down one's comforts in order to lend money to the Government and to the Allies is a sacrifice of sorts, although buying Liberty Bonds by transferring savings deposits or converting securities is hardly to be called that.

The thing to do is to try to visualize what the people inside the steel ring about Belgium, and the marvelous people of France, and the nobly muddling-through people of England, are doing.

Inside that steel ring about Belgium a whole people of seven and a half million imprisoned bodies and sorely beset souls has made constant, universal, terrible sacrifice for nearly four years to maintain a spiritual and (to the extent possible in the face of machine guns at street heads and in open places) a physical resistance to the German Juggernaut. The Teuton government in Belgium has kept up ever since the days of the invasion a persistent attempt to break down this resistance by brute force, insidious intrigue and open invitation to an easier life.

But the Belgians have chosen suffering and sacrifice rather than surrender of national and personal honor.

The French *morale*, after an inconceivable sacrifice of men, money and material, was never higher than now. England has given most of its best and is now giving the rest, and living a life of repression quite beyond our present understanding. All these people are making the superlative sacrifice. Our opportunity is beginning.

We must try to put ourselves somewhere near them in

this common opportunity and need for individual repression of luxury and comfort. We are with them heart and soul and army and navy in this great struggle against darkness and catastrophe. But we must also be with them as individuals, as a hundred million earnest and eager individuals committed to go the limit. They are going the limit already; we must go it, too. When we get to that stage there will be nothing to this war but a winning. If we never get to it, there will be every chance of a losing. The Germans know this and they are counting on our selfishness. Are they making their usual mistake in judging the psychology of a people? Or are they, for once, not?

VERNON KELLOGG.